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TREASURE BEQUEST: DEATH AND GIFT IN THE EARLY MIDDLE AGES

High value movables are conveniently symbolic of elite status.^{*} Such objects played a prominent role in social communication within high society during the early Middle Ages.¹ Gift was carried out not only in the context of life, but also in that of death. Grave goods bear witness to offerings to the deceased, but presents were also received from them via the agency of wills. These documents are especially valuable in that they derive from one of the few circumstances in which such exchanges of items were systematically recorded in writing. Roman law made extensive

^{*} For their considerable help with the preparation of this paper, I would like to thank Dr. Rosamond McKitterick, Dr. Greg Woolf and Dr. Patricia Skinner. References are given not only to Latin texts but also, where possible, to English translations.

¹David Cheal, *The Gift Economy* (London, 1988), p. 16, on 'transactions that are used in the ritual construction of social worlds'. See also C. A. Gregory, *Gifts and Commodities* (London, 1982).

provision for the bequest of such 'tokens of esteem'. A whole chapter of the Digest of Justinian is devoted to legacies of gold, silver, jewellery and perfumes, clothing and statues.² The evolution of late antique judicial procedures in the post-Roman west provides a context in which to understand the development of relationships between the living, the dying and the dead.

It must be admitted that the evidence is not especially abundant or easy to interpret. Roman survivals are limited to fragmentary inscriptions, papyri and literary references. However, in the Christian west, various ecclesiastical centres preserved wills for their value as land grants. This has ensured that a small corpus of testaments has been preserved from Merovingian Gaul.³ Although forgery or adaption of estate donation clauses was far from uncommon, it is less easy to imagine the reason for fabrication of details of gifts of single items which might well have had no meaning for later generations. It is instructive to consider Patrick Geary's

²*Digesta*, Theodor Mommsen & Paul Kreuger, eds., Alan Watson, trans., *The Digest of Justinian* 3 (Philadelphia, 1985), 34, 2; pp. 148-158, Latin text and English translation.

³Ian Wood, *The Merovingian Kingdoms, 450-751* (London, 1994), pp. 206-13, provides a general introduction to the evidence, while for more detail see, Ulrich Nonn, 'Merowingische testamente: Studien zum Fortleben einer römischen Urkundenform im Frankreich', *Archiv für Diplomatik* 18 (1972), pp. 1-29.

comments in his study of Abbo's will as evidence for the seventh century aristocracy of Provence. He wrote that, although 'if the form is genuine, the content was probably interpolated... [nevertheless] at most the interpolations may have added certain place names to those actually bequeathed by Abbo' (land, of course, was very much a matter of on-going concern).⁴ There are about twenty texts from before A.D. 750, the authenticity of which is fairly secure. Of these, about one third mention individual 'treasure' items such as silver bowls and chalices, while others include bequests of small amounts of gold coin (*solidi*). The current study will present selected case studies from that material, with the aim of illustrating the early medieval construction of relationships expressed through the publicly witnessed transfer of treasures.

Edward Champlin has made an excellent attempt to re-animate the Roman testament in its social context. Most Romans did not make a will. The illiterate poor had little to give and less access to the legal processes of the empire.⁵ The rich, by contrast, often (but not invariably) had drawn up complex legal agreements of the sort that survive from Merovingian

⁴Patrick Geary, *Aristocracy in Provence*, Monographien zur Geschichte des Mittelalters 31 (Stuttgart, 1985), p. 31.

⁵John Crook, 'Intestacy in Roman Society', *Proceedings of the Cambridge Philological Society*, new ser. 19 (1973), pp. 38-44.

Gaul. In the nobles' world of *amicitia* and other social networks, the will was a public and social act 'tempered with a strong sense of duty, mixed with self-esteem'.⁶ The frequent mention of wills in literary sources such as Pliny's letters, illustrates how the bequests of notables were a matter of popular interest. The power of the gift was magnified by its public nature. Constantine adjusted the laws of gift and donation so as to ensure that the legal acts were performed as publicly as possible.⁷ Even if the item given was small and worth but a tiny fraction of its owner's income, its treasured nature (being made of gold, say), ensured that its style was fitting for its elitist ritual context. Such presents were measured against general conventions of decorum. All 'treasures' would, of course, pass to a person's heirs, unless there was made specific provision for legacies of movables. There was clearly the belief that along with a legacy of land, a wife's personal items, her jewellery, clothes and toiletries, should be

⁶Edward Champlin, *Final Judgements: Duty and Emotion in Roman Wills, 200 B.C. - A.D. 250* (Berkeley, 1991), p. 17.

⁷Ernst Levy, *West Roman Vulgar Law*, *Memoirs of the American Philosophical Society* 29 (Philadelphia, 1951), pp. 138-9 & Wendy Davies, 'The Latin charter tradition in Western Britain, Brittany and Ireland in the early medieval period', in Dorothy Whitelock, Rosamond McKitterick & David Dumville, eds., *Ireland in Early Medieval Europe: Studies in Memory of Kathleen Hughes* (Cambridge, 1982), pp. 258-80, at p. 275.

specifically assigned to her.⁸ Secondly, to friends went ‘tokens’ in the form of coin or crafted goods such as silver plate.⁹ This can be illustrated by the will of Augustus. Dio records that the emperor ‘dictated that many articles and sums of money should be given to many different persons, both relatives of his and others unrelated, not only to senators and knights, but also to kings’.¹⁰

Other individuals in turn made customary gifts to the emperor in their wills.¹¹ It is in this context that Dasumius’ A.D. 108 legacy of a few pounds of precious metal to Trajan should be understood.¹² The will has furthermore been reconstructed as mentioning table-silver and gold and

⁸Champlin [see note 6 above], pp. 122-4.

⁹*Ibid.* pp. 148-50.

¹⁰Dio, *Roman History*, Earnest Cary, ed. & trans., 7 (of 9 vols), Loeb Classical Library 175 (London, 1924), 56, 32, 2; pp. 72-3. The passage refers to A.D. 14.

¹¹David Braund, ‘Royal wills and Rome’, *Papers of the British School at Rome* 51 (1983), pp. 16-57, at p. 54.

¹²V. Arangio-Ruiz, *Fontes Iuris Romani Antejustiniani* 3, *Negotia* (Florence, 1943), no. 48, *Testamentum P. Dasumii Tusci Nobilis Viri*, pp. 132-142 (an edition of *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum* 6 (Berlin, 1862-), 10229); pp. 141-2 & Champlin (1991) [see note 6 above], p. 152.

silver figures.¹³ Gifts of such personal items as plate must have represented a distinct degree of (at least desired) intimacy in the relationship. On the other hand, cash had the advantage of allowing easy equality of gifts amongst friends. In addition, at a lower social level where men and women did not own hoards of plate, cash could play the same role in marking out relationships outside the immediate circle of inheriting relatives. This is just what we find in the surviving, albeit fragmentary, papyri from the civic archive of late antique Ravenna, in which there are frequent references to the giving of *solidi*.¹⁴

The nature of Roman inheritance is illustrated by a wide variety of textual evidence. The same cannot be said for the early Germanic peoples. Tacitus, in the 'Germania', paints a picture of communal tribal existence. Ploughlands were divided up yearly amongst the community.¹⁵ Despite the unsatisfactory nature of the evidence, it seems clear that by the time of the

¹³Arangio-Ruiz [see note 12 above], no. 48; p. 135, line 38, ' - - *item argenti es*]CARI ET POTOR[i] EX MEO QUOD E[ligerit - -', & p. 138, lines 74-5,' - - *item signa mea aure*[A ET ARGENTEA OMNIA ET IM[agines argentias meas omnes'.

¹⁴Jan-Olof Tjäder, ed., *Die Nichtlitterarischen Lateinischen Papyri Italiens aus der Zeit 445-700* 1 (Lund 1955) & 2 (Stockholm 1982), nos. 4-6.

¹⁵Tacitus, 'Germania', M. Hutton, trans., in *Tacitus: Opera* 1 (of 5 vols), Loeb Classical Library 35, rev. ed. (London, 1970), 26; pp. 168-71.

invasions, the power of royalty and of family units had considerably eroded the enormous power held by the kin in early tribal culture.¹⁶ The settlement of barbarians by the Roman government was achieved under a system of allotment. The nature of the system of *hospitalitas* has been a matter of huge controversy. Suffice it to say that even if barbarians merely enjoyed tax-revenues rather than actually receiving land themselves, with that money they were then able to enter the world of Roman land-owning, with its associated legal forms.¹⁷ For example, it has been stated that ‘as far as the records allow us to look, we find Gothic nobles buying and selling in the traditional and often archaic Roman legal forms’.¹⁸

The appearance of the codes notwithstanding, there was no precise distinction between Romans and barbarians in legal practice. There *were* separate law codifications stemming from very different traditions, but in the situation of Burgundy, for instance, these have been seen as applying to individuals according to their political and social role, rather than their

¹⁶Malcolm Todd, *The Early Germans* (Oxford, 1992), p. 32.

¹⁷Levy [see note 7 above], 87, expresses this view, ‘private ownership... constituted the basis of the law of property in the early kingdoms on Roman soil, for the Germanic population as well as the Roman’.

¹⁸Thomas S. Burns, *A History of the Ostrogoths*, Midland Book ed. (Bloomington, 1991), p. 125.

cultural or ethnic community.¹⁹ Indeed, the *Lex Burgundionem* says that if a ‘barbarian’ wishes to give or to make a will, either Roman or German custom may be observed.²⁰ The ‘barbarian’ law-codes themselves are enigmatic documents, which, moreover, are far from fulsome on the topic of inheritance. With regard to the Celtic evidence it has been remarked that the rules of inheritance are ‘assumed rather expounded’ in the laws, a remark which fits many passages of Germanic law.²¹ So, for example, there is no mention of wills in the *Lex Salica* and it has been explained that the chapter *de alodis*, ‘gives only a partial statement of Frankish inheritance... [because] it is a statement of the peculiar “Frankishness” of Salian practice’: it lists the ways in which the scheme for intestate inheritance differs from Roman practice.²²

¹⁹Patrick Amory, ‘The meaning and purpose of ethnic terminology in the Burgundian laws’, *Early Medieval Europe* 2 (1993), pp. 1-28, at p. 26.

²⁰R. J. R. Goffin, *The Testamentary Executor in England and Elsewhere* (London, 1901), pp. 14-15, compares the various codes and gives references including to the *Lex Burgundionem* text, ‘*si quis posthaec barbarus vel testari voluerit, vel donare, aut Romanam consuetudinem aut barbaricam esse servandam sciat*’.

²¹Thomas Charles-Edwards, *Early Irish and Welsh Kinship* (Oxford, 1993), p. 61.

²²*Pactus Legis Salicae*, K. A. Eckhardt, ed., *Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Leges Nationum Germanicarum* (Hanover, 1962), 59, ‘On inheritance’, pp. 222-4 & *Laws of the Salian and Ripuarian Franks*, Theodore John Rivers, trans. (New York 1987), pp. 106-7.

The practice of distributing lands primarily among sons was displayed in the repeated divisions of the Merovingian kingdom between brothers. The position of women, with regard to early Germanic land-holding practice, is difficult to determine. They were especially associated with movable goods, above all the ownership of dowries.²³ If early Germanic practice can be thought of as concentrating on socially accepted norms in the handing on of goods, the Roman tradition offered the formal opportunity to set out *in writing* the transfer of specific items to specific individuals, as witnessed by a chosen group of people. This ability was clearly seen as advantageous in the early medieval world, as witnessed by the continuation of that late antique tradition. Nevertheless, such means of social construction did not always work smoothly. Gregory of Tours, in his 'Life of the Fathers', gives a splendid description of the reading of the will of Nicetius of Lyons in A.D. 573. The document was 'brought to the forum where, before crowds of people, it was opened and read out by the

Quotation from Alexander Callander Murray, *Germanic Kinship Structure: Studies in Law and Society in Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages*, Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, Studies and Texts 65 (Toronto, 1983), pp. 211-2.

²³Suzanne Fonay Wemple, *Women in Frankish Society: Marriage and the Cloister 500-900* (Philadelphia, 1981), p. 46

judge.’²⁴ A priest then exploded with anger when he found that Nicetius had left nothing to the church of the Holy Apostles (later St Nizier) in which the bishop was to be buried. The etiquette of polite communication through the agency of donation had clearly broken down in this case.

How such social worlds were built up through witnessed promises to give, and, we can presume, the ensuing transfer of treasures, will now be illustrated by reference to examples of the will texts themselves. The first piece which I wish to introduce, the will of Ermintrude of Paris, has been dated to the early seventh century.²⁵ The testament, an original copy on papyrus, is untidy, idiosyncratic and with some very obscure vocabulary.

²⁴Gregory of Tours, *Liber Vitae Patrum*, in Bruno Krusch, ed., *Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Scriptores Rerum Merovingicarum* 1 (Hanover, 1885), pp. 661-744, '*huius antestitis testamentum in foro delatum, turbis circumstantibus, a iudice reseratum recitatumque est...*' etc & *Life of the Fathers*, Edward James, trans, *Translated Texts for Historians*, Latin Series 1 (liverpool, 1985), pp. 68-70.

²⁵Ermintrude, *Testamentum*, in J. M. Pardessus, ed., *Diplomata, Chartae, Epistolae, Leges aliaque Instrumenta ad Res Gallo-Francicas Spectantia nunc nova Ratione Ordinata* 2 (Paris, 1849), no. 451; pp. 255-8. Jean-Pierre Laporte, 'Pour une nouvelle datation du testament d'Ermenthrude', *Francia* 14 (1986), pp. 574-7. Note however, that Jean Mabillon, *De Liturgica Gallicana* (Paris, 1685), pp. 462-6, no. 5 & Jean Vezin & Harmut Atsma, eds., *Chartae Latinae Antiquiores* 14 (Zurich, 1982), pp. 72-9, would put the date 25 to 75 years earlier.

In addition to gifts of land to the north-east of Paris to family members and Parisian churches, there were donations of workers, farm animals, equipment, clothing and also items of precious metal. The treasures were given to relatives and to churches. Thus, Ermintrude gave to her son a silver pot (*canna*) valued at twenty-five *solidi* and a silver goblet (*caucus*) worth thirty.²⁶ A grandson, Bertigisilus, received a silver pitcher (*ichrarius*).²⁷ A grand-daughter, Deorovara, was given a dish (*scutella*) decorated with crosses.²⁸ The church of St Peter in Paris got a silver pitcher or pot (*urceus*) worth twelve *solidi* together with a gold clasp with gems on it. To the church of Lady Mary went a silver bowl (*gabata*) worth twelve *solidi* and a gold cross valued at seven. To St Stephen went a nielloed ring, valued at four *solidi*, and another with Ermintrude's name upon it goes to St Gervase.²⁹ The cathedral of Paris, as was perhaps only

²⁶Ermintrude (1849) [see note 25 above], p. 255, '... dono tibi canna argentia, valante plus minus sol. XXV, et a parte mea dono tibi cauco argentio, valante sol. xxx'.

²⁷*Ibid.* p. 256, 'Item dulcissimo nepoti meo Bertegisilo, ichrario argentio'.

²⁸*Ibid.* p. 256, 'Nepoti meae Deoravarae, scutella argentea cruciclata... dari constituo'.

²⁹*Ibid.* p. 256, 'Baselicis constitutis Parisius id est basilicae Sancti Petri, urcio argentio valente soledus duodec, et fibla aurea gemmata...(text damaged)...manto dario constituo. Basilicae domane Mariae gavata argentea valenta sol. duodece, et cruce aurea valenet sol, septe, dari jubeo. Basilicae domni Stephani anolo aurea nigellato, valente sol. quattuor, dari

fitting, got an especially grand silver platter (*missorium*) valued at fifty *solidi*. St Vincent obtained ten silver spoons. There was also a sharing out of *vestmentia*.³⁰

This evidence is partly at odds and partly accords with what is known of classical Roman practice. The gifts to relatives in the absence of friends represent a different practice, as at first sight do the token offerings to the churches. If however, the saints thereby represented are understood as powerful friends, then the Roman pattern of treasure gifts is here nicely replicated in the context of a Christian society.³¹ The gift of single items of treasure appears as the prominent means of the bestowal of tokens of personal recognition. The witness list of Ermintrude's will included two high ranking officials, a *spatharius* (royal sword-carrier) and a *defensor*

vol. Basilicae domni Gervasi anolo aureo, nomen meum in se habentem scribitum, dari praecipio'.

³⁰*Ibid.* p. 257, 'Sacrosancte Ecclesiae civitatis Parisiorum, missorium argenteo, valente sol. quinquaginta, dari praecipio. Basilicae Sanctae-Cruces vel domni Vincenti, cocliaria argentea dece, dari jubeo. Lectaria par uno, et vestimenti mei, pareclo uno, fratribus ad minsa basilicae Sancti-Dionis dari praecipio. Alio pareclo vestimenti ad vico Bonisiaca Fratribus dari constituo. Tertio pareclo vestimenti Emilia ad vico dari jubeo'.

³¹There is, of course, a vast literature on this topic. Good introductions are Peter Brown, *The Cult of the Saints* (Chicago, 1981), & Raymond Van Dam, *Leadership and Community in Late Antique Gaul* (Berkeley, 1985), both with extensive references and bibliography.

(high city official) of Paris. As Nonn has pointed out, she was an important woman and her inscribed finger ring was a significant token. She was thus communicating both within her family and amongst the high society of her region.³²

Perhaps the most famous Merovingian will is that of Remigius, bishop of Rheims, who, according to Gregory of Tours, baptised Clovis.³³ The testament has been the centre of controversy, partly because it is found presented to us in different forms by two later authors. The first ('short' version) is included by Hincmar in the ninth century *Vita Remigii Episcopi Remensis*.³⁴ The second version, which includes additional passages, is furnished by Flodoard in his mid-tenth century *Historia*

³²Ulrich Nonn, 'Erminethrud - eine vornehme neustriche Dame um 700', *Historisches Jahrbuch* 102 (1982), pp. 135-43.

³³Gregory of Tours, *Libri Historiarum X*, Bruno Krusch & Wilhelm Levison, eds., *Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Scriptores Rerum Merovingicarum* 1, 1 (Hanover, 1951), 2, 31; pp. 76-8 & *The History of the Franks*, Lewis Thorpe, trans. (Harmondsworth 1974), pp. 143-4.

³⁴Remigius of Rheims: Hincmar's version, *Testamentum S. Remigii*, Bruno Krusch, ed., *Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Scriptores Rerum Merovingicarum* 3 (Hanover, 1896), pp. 336-341, with summarised additions of Flodoard, *Addimenta Amplioris Testamenti S. Remigii*, pp. 341-7.

Remensis Ecclesiae.³⁵ The editor of Hincmar, Krusch, did not approve of either version. However, an article of 1957, submitted his formal criticisms to severe scrutiny. Jones, Grierson and Cook judged, after lengthy deliberations that ‘the case against the [Hincmar] will is, it is submitted, very weak.’³⁶ Since it is not an original copy it can never be so secure as the will of Ermintrude, but the language and style of both documents fit well together.

The Hincmar version of the will of Remigius is undated and its origin can only be measured against the year of Remigius’ death which took place in A.D. 533. His heirs were the church of Rheims, Lupus (the son of Remigius’ deceased brother), and his nephew, the priest Agricola. The bishop bequeathed to his church *coloni* and *coloniae*. To his successor bishop he left his white Easter chasuble, two dove-coloured rugs, and three household curtains.³⁷ To the archdeacon Ursus, there went several

³⁵Remigius of Rheims: Flodoard’s version, *Testamentum S. Remigii*, J. Heller & G. Waitz , eds., *Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Scriptores* 13 (Hanover, 1881), pp. 428-443.

³⁶A. H. M. Jones, P. Grierson & J. A. Crook. ‘The authenticity of the “Testamentum S. Remigii”’, *Revue Belge de philologie et d’histoire* 35 (1957), pp. 356-373, at p. 368-9.

³⁷Remigius: Hincmar [see note 34 above], p. 337, lines 3-4, ‘*Futuro episcopo successori meo amphibalum album paschalum relinquo: stragola columbina duo, vela tria, que sunt ad hostia diebus festis triclinii, cellae et culinae*’.

specified items of clothing including ‘the best tunic I leave at my death’ and a rug.³⁸ A silver pot (*vasa*) of eighteen pounds in weight was to be divided between the churches of Rheims and Laon for the making of patens and chalices. Another silver pot (*vasa*) which had originally been given by Clovis, was to go to Rheims for the making of a thurible and chalice.³⁹ To a further nephew, Praetextatus, were granted a number of slaves, four spoons, a cup, a cloak and a crozier. Praetextatus’ son, Parorius, was bequeathed three spoons, a cup and a cape. The woman, Remigia, received three spoons with Remigius’ name on them, a cloth and a bowl ‘about which I have spoken to Gundobad’.⁴⁰ A series of donations

³⁸*Ibid.* p. 339, lines 18-20, ‘*Ursi archidiaconi familiaribus usus obsequiis, dono ei domitextilis casulam subtilem et aliam plenioram, duo saga delicata, tappete quod habeo in lecto et tunicam quam tempore transitus mei reliquero meliorem*’.

³⁹*Ibid.* p. 337, lines 4-10, ‘*Vas argenteum X et VIII librarum inter te, heres mea, et diocesim tuam aecclesiam Lungdunensem, factis patensis atque calcibus ad ministerium sacrosanctum, prout volui, Deo, annuente distribui. Alius argentium vas, quod mihi dominus illustris memoriae Hludovichus rex, quem de sacro baptismatis fonte suscepi, donare dignatus est, ut de eo facerem, quod ipse voluisset, tibi, heredi meae aecclesiae supra memoratae, iubeo turibulum et imaginatum calicem fabricari*’.

⁴⁰*Ibid.* p. 338, lines 13-19, ‘*Delegoque nepoti meo Praetextato... coclearia quattuor de maioribus, acitabulum, lacernam, quam mihi tribunus Friaredus dedit, et argenteam cabutam, figuraturam: filiolo illius Parorio acitabulam et tria coclearia et casulam, cuius*

of *solidi* (gold coins) were made to various ranks of clerics in the church. The deacons and priests of Rheims were given between them twenty-five *solidi*. The subdeacons, readers, door-keepers and poor on the register, were to receive two *solidi* amongst each group; eight in total.⁴¹ The priests of Laon were left eighteen *solidi*, whilst the subdeacons, readers and door-keepers shared four in total and the poor were allotted one *solidus*.⁴² The church at Sissiones got eight *solidi*; Chalons, six; Mouzon, five; Chery, four and Porcien, four. Vancq was left a convenient field, as an equivalent token.⁴³ Six *viri clarissimi* subscribed, then there was appended, ‘after the completion and signing of this will, it occurred to me that a silver dish weighing six pounds should go to the church of the lord martyrs Timothy and Apollinaris, from which may be made provision for the future resting place of my bones’.⁴⁴

fimbrias commutavi. Remigiae coclearia tria, que meo sunt nomine titulata, mantele ipsius quod habeo feriale transcribo; hichinaculum quoque dono illi, de quo Gundebado dixi’.

⁴¹*Ibid.* p. 337, *passim*.

⁴²*Ibid.* pp. 338-9, *passim*.

⁴³*Ibid.* pp. 339, *passim*.

⁴⁴*Ibid.* p. 340, lines 7-9, ‘*Post conditum testamentum, immo signatum, occurrit sensibus meis, ut basilice domnorum martyrum Timothei et Apollinaris missorium argentium VI librarum ibi deputem, ut ex eo sedes futura meorum ossuum componatur’.*

The provisions appear in a rather jumbled order, not as given above. But when classified, the gifts show coherence. The next bishop and the present archdeacon are given vestments. Cash sums are used in graded amounts to the staff of the main two churches and to the smaller churches in the area. In addition to land and slaves, most of his relatives have treasures given to them. Three times this is in the form of spoons, a dish and a garment or cloth. These are specifically personal items, given according to a repeated formula, which suggests a desire for equality of symbolic gift. Praetextatus is to get a cloak given by Friaredus, and Remigia is to get back the cloth she had given to Remigius. Presumably, his heirs and relatives Lupus and Agricola would have known the particular objects he was talking about. Remigius made extensive use of cash gifts, but only for the politely impersonal purpose of a general allotment to clergy and churches. Specific items were given out to churches with instructions for them to be broken up, especially for the making of liturgical vessels. The friendship of the saints was therefore paid heed to, albeit with a rather more patronal style than was the case with Ermintrude and her granting of her ring and brooch, her most personal treasures. The lack of donation to worldly superiors (the equivalent of 'friends' such as Trajan) is notable. Remigius appears here in

the context of providing ritualised fulfilment of the dictates of duty and emotion as bishop of the local Church and head of his family.

As has been remarked, it is impossible to know precisely how reliable the text is. However, the intricate provisions of specific items would hardly appear to have been necessary for an eloquent forgery, and they would have been quite unsuitable if such provisions were unexpected in old documents. A comparison of the Hincmar and Flodoard versions of Remigius' will is illuminating. The longer text is made up of the shorter plus additions. There are a number of major interpolations. There is included a new and lengthy list of estates which are to go to Rheims, some of which, we are carefully and repeatedly informed, were given by the lord king Clovis of illustrious memory.⁴⁵ This phrase is based on the Hincmar reference to Clovis, but is here laid on rather thick.⁴⁶ This section makes clear sense as a forgery, as it adds land endowments and emphasises relations with Clovis referred to in the Hincmar version only in connection with a silver dish. That very passage itself may seem potentially suspect, but it closely parallels a reference in the same text to a cloak given by the far from famous Friaredus: items were thus partly defined by those who

⁴⁵Remigius: Flodoard [see note 35 above], p. 341, line 27 to p. 343, line 16, *passim*.

gave them. Besides, the Clovis dish is ordered to be broken up; it is to be made into church plate, not at the request of the king, but of Remigius. These details would hardly have been inserted by a later writer with the aim of magnifying the position of Clovis. This text contrasts with the situation in Flodoard's text, where the dish given by Clovis in the Hincmar version is the subject of a localised alteration. The rather dowdy 'other silver dish', '*aliud argentium vas*', becomes made of gold and weighs ten pounds.⁴⁷ Added to the chalice to be made with images (*imaginatum calicem*), there was to be an inscription.⁴⁸ One wonders if there was a certain well-known object kept as a relic of the saint, to which this addition referred? As for the presence of the original dish, if it was a gift from the king, it would have been a prominent item for Remigius and his family. By remaking it into church plate it would, appropriately enough, receive its own baptism.

An additional major interpolation builds up the donation of quantities of *solidi* into a statement of benefaction to all the ecclesiastical

⁴⁶*Ibid.* p. 342, lines 29-30, '*mihi domnus illustris memoriae Hludowichus rex, quem de sacro baptismatis fonte suscepi, cum adhuc paganus Deum ignoraret, ad proprium tradidit*'.

⁴⁷*Ibid.*, p. 343, line 18, '*vas aureum decem librarum*'.

⁴⁸*Ibid.* p.343, lines 20-21.

institutions in Rheims.⁴⁹ The will is thus aggrandised, as is Remigius' reputation for charity and patronage to the church. The third addition is a chunk of homily on the subject of the powers of the bishop, including in it biblical quotations and ending with an *amen*.⁵⁰ In addition, further aggrandisement is achieved in the Flodoard text by the augmentation of the unsuitably secular six *viri clarissimi* of the Hincmar subscription-list, by no less than eight bishops and three presbyters.⁵¹ These differences between the Hincmar and Flodoard versions highlight the fact not simply that alterations in documents were made, but also that such interpolations would tend to follow patterns which can be extrapolated. Symbolic treasure gifts were more associated with immediate social links and had little relevance, in comparison with the ownership of land, for future generations. The presence of small, individual gifts of treasure items in Merovingian documents, it is contended, only appears intelligible when understood in the context of the practices of symbolic gift in the immediatly post-Roman age.

These individual single gifts should be put in the context of the huge treasure hoards held by early medieval magnates, thus emphasising the

⁴⁹*Ibid.* p. 343, line 24 to p. 344, line 23.

⁵⁰*Ibid.* p. 345, line 6 to p. 346, line 36.

symbolic nature of these individual gifts. Gregory of Tours wrote of the dowry brought together in A.D. 584 for Rigunth, daughter of the Merovingian king Chilperic, that ‘there was such a vast assemblage of objects that the gold, silver and other precious things filled fifty carts’.⁵² Treasure was, on occasion, provided *en masse* as part of church endowment, and recorded in inventories, as can be seen from the Constantinian donations in the *Liber Pontificalis*.⁵³ One such treasure list, attributed to Desiderius, bishop of Auxerre from A.D. 605 and A.D. 623, is contained in the ninth-century *Gesta Pontificum Autissiodorensium*, which was modelled on the *Liber Pontificalis*.⁵⁴ The relevant section is attributed to the monks Heric, Alagus and Raingala who were active in the years following 870, but it includes material which Rouche refers to as

⁵¹*Ibid.* p. 346, line 37 to p. 347, line 17.

⁵²Gregory of Tours [see note 32 above], 6, 45; p. 318, ‘*Nam tanta fuit multitudo rerum, ut aurum argentumque vel reliqua ornamenta quinquaginta plaustra levarent*’, & (1974), p. 378.

⁵³*Liber Pontificalis, pars prior*, Theodor Mommsen, ed., *Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Gestorum Pontificum Romanorum* 1 (Berlin, 1898), Silvester, pp. 42-72, etc, & *The Book of Pontiffs (to AD. 715)*, Raymond Davis, trans., (Liverpool, 1989), pp. 14-26.

⁵⁴*Gesta Pontificum Autissiodorensium, de Desiderio*, in L. M. Duru, ed., *Bibliothèque historique de L’Yonne* (Auxerre, 1850), pp. 332-340. The treasure list runs from the top of p. 334 to line 7 of p. 336. It is thus far too long to give here in full.

evidently extracted from Desiderius' will.⁵⁵ He refers to an extraordinary list which takes up two pages of printed text. Important for the dating of these lists is the repeated use of the word '*anaclean*' to indicate relief decoration. The only close parallel is '*anacleta*', which is found in the treasure lists of Leodbod's 'will' (the donation charter of Fleury), whose origin is from a neighbouring diocese only thirty years or so later (c. A.D. 650).⁵⁶ The remainder of the somewhat obscure vocabulary mirrors that in other Merovingian documents. It certainly appears to represent a genuine inventory of the period. It is carefully noted that to Stephen's church went in total 420 pounds, 7 ounces of silver, whilst St. Germanus got rather less, 119 pounds and five ounces. These totals do not quite add up to the listed weights, which, in modern terms equal about 137 kg. One of the greatest hoards ever found in Britain, the Mildenhall treasure, is dwarfed in comparison. Buried around A.D. 360, its items could easily be described using the language of the Auxerre list. A recent catalogue entry notes that

⁵⁵Michel Rouche, *L'Aquitaine des Wisigoths aux Arabes 418-781: naissance d'une région* (Paris, 1979), p. 200, note 111.

⁵⁶Leodbod, *Testamentum*, in J. M. Pardessus, ed., *Diplomata, Chartae, Epistolae, Leges aliaque Instrumenta ad res Gallo-Francicas Spectantia nunc nova Ratione Ordinata* 2 (Paris, 1849), no. 358, pp. 142-7, at p. 143, '*vasa dono argentea, anacleta, pensantea libris VIII et uncias duas*'.

‘though many (late Roman) families possessed silver plate, a set of this quality would have belonged to a person of outstanding wealth and status.’⁵⁷ At 26 kg. it comes to less than a sixth of what is listed as donated by Desiderius.

The evidence of lists and inventories such as these shows that items of elite culture were collected into vast hoards by those able to do so. Treasure items circulated between such accumulations in early medieval Europe in a variety of ways, one of which appears to have been the socially determined individual testamentary gift. Single treasure items, in the context of hoarding, can be seen to have been employed as tokens of admiration, affection, or duty, in a ritual practice based on Roman precedent. There is, however, the important difference that symbolic gift of individual items is strongly focused in the later period toward relatives and saints rather than friends. Since gift was a social and not just a personal act, this may reflect the fact that the ‘audience’ for Merovingian wills was more restricted and the kin more important than was the case in a world of Roman empire-wide networks of *amicitia*.

⁵⁷J. P. C. Kent & K. S. Painter, *Wealth of the Roman World, AD 300-700* (London, 1977), p.

Classical practice was associated with the maintenance of social correctness. As Veyne has written, the Roman will ‘was a kind of confession in which social man revealed himself fully and by which he would be judged’.⁵⁸ This desire had not atrophied in Merovingian Gaul, although societal changes had by then led to changes in the composition of a testator’s polite or emotional obligations. The then importance of the earliest medieval wills to religious houses can be judged from the fact that it has been argued that ‘most gifts to the church in the fifth century actually came by bequest’.⁵⁹ Of the present significance of such testaments, Rosamond McKitterick has noted that ‘these documents show us not only how wealthy these magnates were in terms of their movable and immovable property, but also what they considered to be precious among their possessions.’⁶⁰ Not only that, but as has been shown, these wills provide valuable evidence for the ritual expression of social relations. The witnessing of wills and their subsequent public reading displayed these formal friendships in high society, including between the

⁵⁸Paul Veyne, ‘The Roman Empire’, in Veyne, ed., *A History of Private Life 1, From Pagan Rome to Byzantium*, Arthur Goldhammer, trans. (Cambridge, Mass., 1987), pp. 5-233, at p. 31.

⁵⁹Davies (1982) [see note 7 above], p. 276 note 69.

⁶⁰Rosamond McKitterick, *The Carolingians and the Written Word* (Cambridge, 1989), p. 158.

aristocracy and the church, each of which desired the favour of the other. Such was the continuing power and potential of testamentary gift, which early medieval notables exploited in the manner of their own culture to provide public social links in life and in death.

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